
EU Strategy for the Danube Region
Priority Area 1a – To improve mobility and multimodality: Inland waterways

**7th Meeting of the Steering Group for
Priority Area 1a of the EUSDR**

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MINUTES

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The presentation slides of this SG meeting are integral part of the minutes. They are provided on www.danube-navigation.eu.

1. Welcoming of participants and status presentation of PA1a

The PAC1a, represented by Mr. Reinhard Vorderwinkler, welcomed the participants. The Romanian Representatives were not able to attend the meeting and transmitted their apologies on beforehand.

Gert-Jan Muilerman (Technical Secretariat PA1a) presented the status of work of the Technical Secretariat, the milestones since the last SG meeting and the main activities of the next months.

2. Presentation of draft Fairway Maintenance Master Plan

The main focus of this SG meeting was put on the Master Plan on Fairway Maintenance. The draft plan had been sent to the SG members in advance.

At the beginning, the structure, objectives and target groups of the document were presented. Afterwards, each country section was discussed and participants had the opportunity to provide feedback.

The Technical Secretariat emphasized that the Master Plan is a joint document and the draft provided represents a starting impulse and first estimate based on the data available at this point in time.

Further input by the countries is needed and very much appreciated. Countries that are not partners in the NEWADA duo project will need special attention.

The following feedback was provided by the Steering Group Members:

Germany: More time is needed to prepare the requested data. There had been misunderstandings on the desired information;

Austria: The information contained in the Master Plan is valid and complete. In Austria, no major problems exist besides the limited market concerning dredging companies. This fact results in restrictions of available equipment in urgent situations. As a consequence, prioritisation of actions is needed and performed. Another field for improvement is backup of energy supply of water level gauges in bad weather situations.

Slovakia: More time is needed for discussing the Master Plan and checking the contained data.

Hungary: The Master Plan is welcomed in Hungary as joint efforts in waterway maintenance are needed along the Danube. It is necessary to have a solid and professional background available for ministerial meetings.

Nevertheless, the Fairway Maintenance Master Plan is considered as a “phantom document”. There was not enough time for discussion and check of validity. Furthermore, there was no information provided on who is involved in the elaboration of the document. Better communication within countries is needed, but also more information on the methodology. The government level should be more involved.

Croatia: Croatia is very pleased with the Fairway Maintenance Master Plan. Nevertheless, more time is needed to integrate data on the Drava and Sava river.

Hungary: feeling of ownership is needed – transparency of ownership and methodology and who is involved is needed;

Serbia: Serbia supports the initiative of the Master Plan. The Serbian representative emphasized that this is the first time that costs for structural investments and maintenance work are divided. It might be necessary to emphasize that the plan is about *maintenance*, it seems that not all countries understood it correctly. The NEWADA duo partners would like to be more involved in the second draft of the document, there were differences in the data spotted.

Bosnia-Herzegovina: There was too little time to coordinate within the country about the requested data, especially concerning the Sava river. There is more time needed to gather the requested data.

Some data leaks are due to structural issues: the maintenance of the Sava river is not in the focus in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Emphasis is put on structural works, maintenance just relates to the signalling system acc. to an agreement with Croatia. There is also no state level organisation dealing with maintenance, but it might be established soon. A roadmap for maintenance being prepared in coordination with Serbia right now.

Bulgaria: The document is very important and desired. There is more time needed to evaluate the document and fill data gaps. There is a meeting with Romanian colleagues planned. Afterwards, more input will be provided.

Romania: Mr. Capatu contributed the viewpoint of Romania, which is happy about the initiative of the Master Plan. Nevertheless, there is more time needed to provide the requested data and check the validity. It might also be better to mention who is responsible for critical sections than mentioning where they are located.

Sava Commission: The Master Plan was communicated late. Data about the tributaries is missing in the document, although the information is available. The NEWADA duo needs assessment has gaps as well concerning this issue.

Danube Commission: The Danube Commission thanked via donau for the preparation of the document. The Master Plan is a huge first step, but not finished. The question about the desired data for finalisation was raised, especially in the light of the fact the Danube Commission will take the coordination role for the Danube in the field of maintenance. Negotiations with the EC are underway, an agreement is to be signed in June. From a first overview of the Master Plan, it can be stated that tributaries are missing and that the Hungarian data is very contradictive. Furthermore, maintenance in Moldova is performed by Romania.

Another question relates to how the critical sections were chosen. As they were based on an assessment by each country and the criteria therefore differ, the word “high priority” should be deleted. Just “critical sections” should be mentioned. *The participants agreed on this suggestion.*

Danube Tourist Commission: The document is an important step. The season has already started – about 150 ships are already cruising along the Danube.

TINA VIENNA: The draft Master Plan is important document and good for raising questions.

Royal Schuttevaer Rotterdam: The international barge industry welcomes this initiative very much as the Danube gets more and more important.

Thomas Hartl: The input was collected by the project partners of NEWADA duo in the “Needs Assessment Report”. This report is the basis for the Master Plan and could only be finished 3 days ago.

PAC Reinhard Vorderwinkler: The idea behind the remarks of the SG members is understood. The document is as good as the data provided. If there is an agreement on the principle structure of document, data gaps will be filled with help of the countries. The utmost is done to involve all Danube countries as we need a complete picture of the Danube region. All partners will be asked to fill the data gaps including the navigable tributaries. A “data provided by” section will be added for every country to raise transparency. The Master Plan is a living document – and will also need constant update. An agenda point at each SG meeting should be added to update the FMMP.

It is not purpose of the Master Plan to interfere with agreements between and structures within countries. Developing measures based on the Master Plan is task of the countries.

The Steering Group Members agreed on the principal structure of the document, assured to provide missing data and to perform validity checks.

3. New timeline & next steps

The deadline of the Transport Ministers Council in Luxembourg on 5 June as well as the EUSDR Annual Forum End of June deadline cannot be reached.

The Steering Group Members agreed on the following revised time planning:

until 15 May 2014:

- SG members mobilize administrations which can provide data for currently lacking/incorrect data
- SG members / country representatives provide the PA1a Technical Secretariat with contact data on institutions and administrations responsible for additionally required data

until 18 May 2014: The PA1a Technical Secretariat contact the mentioned institutions/administrations (CC: Steering Group members), with the request to provide data for draft Fairway Maintenance Master Plan

until 18 June 2014: Deadline for data input and validation of data (in parallel) by identified institutions and administrations

until 30 June 2014: Finalisation of Fairway Maintenance Master Plan by the Technical Secretariat as input for written procedure by Danube Transport Ministers in July 2014. A request for endorsement will be made.

4. Letters of recommendation

The proposal of the Technical secretariat to start a written procedure for the elaboration of a Letter of recommendation for the project “Bala Branch” was accepted by the SG members.

The Serbian representative announced that the Technical Secretariat will be formally addressed by Serbia until end of May concerning the project “3D waterway mapping”.

5. Technical Assistance Facility

The decision of PA 10 and external committee is expected next week and will be communicated.

6. Working Group on Administrative Processes

The aim of this working group is to harmonise processes along the Danube and to reduce administrative burdens. The process has to be seen on the longer term. First results of the working group were presented.

7. Reflection on targets of EUSDR

The participants were asked to discuss the EUSDR targets for PA1a. The EC mentioned that all targets of all PAs have to be seen as a whole under the umbrella of the EUSDR. There will be a revision of the strategy and its objectives as a whole. The date will be decided jointly by the EC and the member states. The SG agreed unanimously that no revision of the targets and no definition of intermediate objectives is opportune at this point in time.

8. Next meeting

The offer of the Port Authority of Vukovar to host the next SG and WG meeting was accepted. The proposed date is 28th/29th October 2014.

9. Any other business

The European Commission representative Irina Cruceru (DG Regio) mentioned that the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes for the Danube Programme are under development. The

EC has received a letter by the PA1a Coordinator asking if waterway maintenance equipment is eligible. The EC informed the SG members that, if the issue is included in the Operational Programmes of each country, the equipment is fundable. Nevertheless, the maintenance activities as such are not fundable.

A definite, formal reply will be sent to the National Contact Points.

Another request to the EC had been launched by Pro Danube Austria. They were inquiring about possibilities to backfinance state aid schemes for renewal of the fleet. The EC referred to the Czech Model, where this is already the case. Nevertheless, this is subject of the negotiations with the individual countries and is dependent on National Transport Plans. It has to be seen in a greater context.

Ms. Cruceru informed the participants on the outcome of the Innovative Danube Vessel study that focused on new and environmentally friendly designs of ships and pushers. There are ongoing discussions between Commission and Pro Danube International on how to finance the implementation of the study results.

There are 3 main results of study containing a mix of elements. The study will be presented during the Annual Forum and should be taken up by Steering Group to decide on follow-up steps and see if the industry is interested in financing these innovations.

An ongoing study deals with jobs induced by Danube navigation. The study is implemented by ECORYS, who will contact the countries. The end result is expected in July and should be put on the Agenda of the next steering group.

On the request of Hungary to elaborate the intentions of the EC on this study, Ms Cruceru replied that the EC wants to find out about the job potential of Danube navigation seen on a regional scale. DG MOVE is involved as well, but focusing on the transport potential issue. Starting point of this initiative was the PA1a target to increase transport on the Danube by 20% and the question if this will increase jobs in the region as well.

10. Conclusions

The new time planning (under point 3) for the Fairway Maintenance Master Plan was the main decision of this meeting. Immediate actions are required by the participants as described. Reinhard Vorderwinkler thanked the participants for their contributions and the principal acceptance of the Master Plan. It will be elaborated further by the Technical secretariat in cooperation with the Member States.

Enclosures

Please note: All documents are available for download at the website of EUSDR PA 1a
→ www.danube-navigation.eu

- (1) Presentation of the PA1a Coordinator given at the Steering Group meeting
- (2) List of attendants